

Freethought

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF INDIAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

April & May 1 50 (Delayed)

Rs. 1-25

(The Booklet "A Critique on Major Religions" is sent as a supplement to this issue)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"The Miracle of Islam was that it destroyed idolatary, and the tragedy has been that they rendered religion in to the form of on idol"

—Field Marshal Mohammed Ayub Khan.

Vol. X No. 4 & 5

Annual Subscription : Rs. 15/-

SCIENCE IS UNDERSTOOD, THEOLOGY BELIEV. D

Letters

Rationalism - Need of the Hour

Sir,

I take this opportunity to state that I am interested in rationalism and feels that rationalism is the need of the hour. Lack of rationalist thinking, practice of superstitious beliefs and blind faith are some of the prominent reasons for the backwardness of country. I have full appreciation for your efforts in spreading rationalism. I hope you will continue the same restlessly.

—Suresh Astekar, Bangalore.

MINI BOOK SERIES

Sir,

I am in receipt of Jan-Feb 1960 issue of FREETHOUGHT along with the booklet - Rationalism - you and your family as a supplement. This is very nice and if you publish every month a supplement of a booklet worth Re. 1 on different topics it will be accessible and suitable to all pockets. The booklets must be cheap and informative. I wish your efforts should be crowned with success.

—V. S. Rao, Naidu, Baroda

It is a known fact that Indian Rationalist Association with its meagre resources finds it extremely difficult to bring out its mouth piece FREETHOUGHT even with a few interruption and delays.

In order to release the journal on due dates and without any break all the member and subscribers are requested to renew their membership/subscription and enrol members/subscribers in large number.

IRA is yours, Freethought is yours, help them to survive.

—General Secretary, IRA.

Freethought

Editorial

REVAMPING THE RATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The rationalist movement in our country of late has become discernibly despirited. Its efforts have slackened. The rationalist movement is doldrum's and efforts to rejuvenate it are urgently needed.

We have seen the reactionary backlash during the Jansangh dominated Janatha regime. Personal idiosyncracies of politicians were paraded as acts of virtues. The cronies of these politicians included many astrologers, gurus and babas. In spite of the presence of a vociferous rationalist minority in Kerala, the bha'tas went about gold plating the Shankara monument at Kaladi. Recently the junior Shankaracharya of Kanchi anointed a new temple costing lakhs at a predominantly South Indian conglomeration of devotees in Bombay. These and many other instances of increasing religious activity point to the wane in the influence of rationalist organisations.

The rationalist house today is a divided house. The veterans of the movement in their halcyon days lie back thoroughly disillusioned at the lack of support from the younger generation. A feature of today's younger generation is that though they are not particularly religious, they lack the visionary zeal to stand up and fight the reactionary forces and work for the emancipation of the exploited fellowmen.

There is urgent need to revamp the rationalist movement in our country. Rationalists should unite forgetting the petty squabbles among themselves and put up a united front against the reactionary forces.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the organisation. The growth and vitality of an organisation for social emancipation and uplift depends on the people's support and participation. To this extent the rationalists have a duty not to consider themselves as part of the intelligent elite but to be aware of the aspirations of the common man. This is where eminent rationalists like E.V.R. and Gora succeeded in making themselves socially more relevant.

Another requirement which would help in strengthening the rationalist movement and to revitalise its roots is to have a cadre of youth and student members. At present quite a few of the students are disenchanted with our old ways and religious hypocrisy and lack faith in them. But this disenchantment is not channelised into rationalist thinking. Good rationalist propaganda can win over many fence-sitters.

Another feature of the Rationalist movement, especially in South India, is that some political parties which have professed rationalist attitudes have for the sake of political expediency sacrificed their rationalistic ideals. In the rat race for political power in a country of exploited people, rationalism has been given the go-by.

But what is surprising is that even the rationalists who have for years stood with us have of late shown a nonchalant attitude. Apart from the fact that they fail to enrol new members for the association or subscribers for Freethought, they even fail to renew their own subscription. As a result the finances of I.R.A. have dwindled and Freethought has been languishing over the past few months. Only some munificent gestures from our President and friends and well wishers have kept the organisation and the magazine going.

There is thus an urgent need to revamp the movement and make it strong and serve as an effective organisation of non-conforming freethinkers and rationalists. 'Freethought' a, their mouthpiece can air their views without fear or favour as it has always done.

THE SALVATION OF ST. BESS

When Paddy th' Drunkard arrived in St. Bess
Th' whole town was sure in a heck of a mess
No angel, no tourists—my God, what a plight
For Bessie th' Angel was nowhere in sight

There were no tourist dollars not even a cent
Not a man in a hundred could half—meet his rent
Depression had hit 'em (they'd tried prayer and tears)
But Bessie their angel'd been absent for years

Well, Paddy th' Drunkard arrived just in time
Drank a gallon of whiskey and chased it with wine
He saw Mary and Jesus and angels galore
And St. Bess wasn't short of those tourists no more

Paddy died of V.D. but they claimed he was pure
Like so many church stories it was just plain manure
But they renamed St. Bess and it's now called St. Paddy
(They tell all sorts of tales of that virtuous laddie)

If you go to St. Paddy you can visit his tomb
See th' spot where he spit and made nine roses bloom
For five dollars more you may kiss his pet cat
And sit in th' outhouse where Paddy once sat.

John B. Denson,
U. S. A.

News and Notes

NOBEL SPERM FOR NOBLE CAUSE

Five Nobel laureates have given sperm to an exclusive sperm bank to be matched with the "right" women in the hope of producing exceptional children, the businessman behind the scheme says.

Mr. Robert K. Graham, a 74 year old Escondido businessman who set up the programme, told "The Los Angeles Times" that three women had been inseminated and became pregnant so far. He said the programme screened women applicants and matched them with a donor's sperm.

"Yes, I'm one of them," said Stanford University's Mr. William B. Shockley, 70, winner of the 1956 Nobel prize in Physics. He is among the scientists who hold the untenable view that blacks are genetically inferior to whites.

Mr. Graham said the sperm bank, called the repository for germinal choice, was in an under ground concrete chamber in an closed location. He said the bank was inspired by Dr. Herman J. Muller, a 1946 Nobel prize winning geneticist who advocated sperm banks in which donations would be taken only from brilliant men. Mr. Graham said prospective mothers must be young, bright and married.

(Times of India, 2-8-80)

COMMENT : A small beginning in the science of human genetics called Eugenics. Think of the possibilities in futures ! Sceptics beware ! !

MOSQUITOES DON'T SPARE SAINTS

The Madhya Pradesh government authorities charged with the job of providing a healthy surrounding to the visiting mahatmas, are finding themselves helpless in ridding the area of mosquitoes.

The sadhus complained that the waters of the Kshipra were so stinking, it was repugnant to enter them for a bath.

The Kumba Mela authorities have kept water stored in two nearby tanks for releasing into the river on the eve of the main bathing festivals.

COMMENT : What the rest of the world realised yesterday, the 'mahatmas' are realising today. Possibly they were smelling so much themselves that it took longer !

IDOLS SEIZED

The Madras police seized two panchaloka idols believed to be 150 years old and valued at Rs. 8 lakhs, from a person on the busy Mount Road on Wednesday.

According to the police, the idols were recovered from a steel trunk in the possession of the person, who was arrested on suspicion. The idols, said to represent the deities of Sridevi—Boodevi or Valli—Deviani were 54 cm. in height and suspected to be stolen.

(What explanation do the believers have for the all powerful's meek surrender to the burglars ? The idols have not yet been christened !

IRRATIONALISM REPLACES SPIRIT OF ENQUIRY

While ascribing the cause for the sluggish growth of scientific thought in India to the growth of imperialism ("The Verdict of History, March 28), Dr. Hasan seems to have ignored a significant factor which enabled the west to make rapid strides, both scientifically and technologically, i.e. its ability

to cut itself off from the old world and face the new in all its vitality.

On the other hand, India, which never lacked scientific and artistic skill in earlier times, seems to have suffered a progressive deterioration. Instead of tapping the springs of suppressed strength and energy of the masses, the nation lapsed into a blind idolatry of the past. This gradually replaced the spirit of enquiry with irrationalism.

Abha Pandey, Delhi
(Courtesy : Times of India)

COMMENT : Reaction is haunting the people. Culture is a dead weight.

EARTH GAINING WEIGHT

The weight of earth is increasing every day by 100 to 110 tons, according to a Soviet study.

Mr. R. Khotinok of the meteorite committee of the USSR Academy of Sciences says that the earth's atmosphere is daily accepting hundreds of billions of specks of meteoric dust particles whose mass ranges from several grammes to hundred-thousandth part of a gram.

(Times of India)

COMMENT ! It is of some solace that all resources are not being depleted !

ARTIFICIAL BLOOD

We should consider ourselves very fortunate to live in an age of discovery and adventure. It is an age which has produced one of the greatest scientists of all time, Albert Einstein. In this age, man has exploded the atom and hydrogen bombs, which could change the face of the earth. Then we have

witnessed man walking on the moon. Now comes the news that artificial blood can be made in the laboratory. As was reported in a recent news item, a 87-year old man received this new artificial blood and was feeling as fit as a man of twenty ; This is really a stupendous achievement ;

Can any one foresee the consequences of this discovery ? Perhaps it will soon be possible to live without food and subsist on a regular injection of this life giving fluid !

W. A. So'ani,
Ahmedabad.

COMMENT : The changes will be most welcome. Man can have several artificial organs. Now blood is added to the list. Before long, beings will be the product of laboratory ! Will his divinity then end ?

REFUGEES CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY IN HOPES OF GOING WEST

Christianity is spreading "like a grassfire" through the huge refugee camp in Khao I Dang, where hundreds have converted from Buddhism—many in the hope that conversion will speed their chances of migrating to the west.

Missionaries in the camp who double as medical and social workers have been handing out tracts, Bibles and hard-to-get T-shirts and have set up a dozen Bible-study groups throughout the camp. Many refugees looking for a bath in this water-short camp have been baptized.

"Rumour says that if you are a Christian, you will be sent to America" said one refugee from Phnom Penh.

There is no exact count of the number of missionaries in Khao I Dang because most of them are there supposedly in the roles of relief workers.

Missionaries however, hold small Bible classes with the refugees before their work days begin.

One highly placed relief official said privately. "The evangelists have done very well." He said the vogue for Christianity began with U.S. First Lady Rosalynn Carter's visit to the Sa Kaew camp last fall.

There is a rumour among the refugees that a Baptist church has been built in America specially for them, if only they would convert.

Mr. Richard Bartsh, who belongs to an evangelical group called "Youth with a mission," claims there are 10,000 to 20,000 converts in this camp of 111,000 refugees.

The conversion rate is remarkable considering that missionaries in Kampuchea, Thailand and Laos have had almost no success.

"Yes, I am a Buddhist," he said. "But this time I become a Christian because that will help me go to the United States.

He added: "The Buddhists help your soul. The Christians help you learn English."

The United States gives preference to refugees who already have relatives there, regardless of religion.

COMMENT: Carrot being dangled. Lure of wealth and career has always been the weapon of missionaries from the west.

FAKE 'SWAMI' CHEATS CHILDLESS WOMEN

A Swami reportedly doing pujas with naked women ringed midnight for granting them the boon of children in his ashram at Thotakadu on the banks of the Periyar, near Palghat, has created sensation among the public.

The Swami, Narayanan by name, is a native of Arimanurthurai in Neyattangara, near Trivandrum. He left his house at a very early age and is believed to have travelled and stayed at a number of places with false name like Guruvayurappa'san. Narayanaswami, Kanaraj Kanchcha ulakkarai and Tirumeni.

A Seventeen year old girl, Kanakam was working in his Ashram as a servant, while her brother is employed at Coimbatore. Following her father's death some months back Kanakam returned to her home.

The Swami is said to have gone to Kanakam's house in a car with rice and other groceries and after handing them over returned to his Ashram with Kanakam.

One day the Swami lodged a complaint with the local police stating that Kanakam had disappeared. But sometime thereafter the lodging of the complaint, the naked dead body of Kanakam was found near the Ashramam at Kuliadal river with her face covered by her petticoat.

Her death continued to be a mystery and it is alleged that attempts were made to bury the dead body without informing the police but the attempts were foiled by the people.

According to reports published in some Kerala newspapers, the swami had indulged in indecent behaviour with naked women while performing pujas for the grant of the boon of children.

(Courtesy: Indian Sun dt. 31-3-80)

COMMENT:

The Swami did not leave a 'fig leaf' of a doubt as to his method of operations. If the women chose it, we should blame our traditions.

HIRE RAMA, SAVE SITA

Hindustan Times of April 6 reports that Indira Gandhi visited Chitrakut and offered prayers at the historic temples of

Kantanath, Rama, Sita and Hanuman and Sati Anasuya.....At the Kantanath temple Mrs. Gandhi observed, "if we Indians follow the ideals enshrined in the Ramayana, most of our problems will be solved."

Before the Lok Sabha elections Indira Gandhi had been telling the people that all the problems facing the country would be solved just by her return to power. Obviously, she has now changed the tune and has taken to prayers to solve these problems.

But will the Assam tangle be settled by following the ideals enshrined in the Ramayana? Will the energy crisis facing the country be solved by chanting the name of Rama?, Will the spiralling prices fall or the law and order situation improve by prayers to the Lord?

And, Madam Prime Minister, what specific ideals enshrined in the Ramayana do you want "we Indians" to follow?

Is it the one shown by Lakshman who cut off the nose and breasts of Surpanakha just because she fell in love with him and professed her desire to marry him?

Or is it the one shown by Vibheeshan who, when the war started, turned traitor, deserted his brother and joined the enemy camp and thereby became a hero?

Or is the example to be followed shown by Rama who threw Sita out of the house because a washerman had indulged in idle gossip about her life while in Lanka and the poor woman had to walk through the fire to prove her chastity?

Perhaps, Indira Gandhi can provide us some enlightenment on these matters. Her increasing number of temple visits and the new-found faith in the Ramayana despite the heavy burden of Prime Ministership is indeed touching.

(Courtesy: New Age weekly)

COMMENT :

Religion and current Indian politics have one thing in common—deception. Is it surprising that the first is a tool in the hands of the second?

FAITH HEALING A HOAX

In the article "The Healing Touch" (Times of India, March 23, '80) the Swami attributes his powers to cosmic rays, which to my mind, is plain eye-wash. Either he is ignorant of the nature of his powers or he is a mystic. The laying of hands on a diseased part of the body to bring about a cure has been practised from Biblical times. The "royal touch" of the old kings of France has also effected many cures. It is based on hypnotism, thus relieving anxiety, pain and sleeplessness contributing a great deal to the patient's comfort and cheerfulness and thus helping to restore his health.

In the modern age, Dr. Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) a Viennese physician, was the first to arouse scientific and popular interest in this field. He achieved his remedies by stroking the sick with artificial magnets. He believed that its magnetic powers had an influence on the human body. Actually, it was the patients' imagination combined with the conscious suggestions of the operator that brought about the cures. The healing power of the water of Lourdes in France may also be based on this principle.

Dr. Mesmer also discovered, accidentally that his touch brought benefit to his patients. He too like, this modern Swami, surrounded himself with an aura of mysticism. He sat in a dimly-lit room filled with the fragrance of a sweet oriental perfume, with strains of a soft melody in the background to create an air of mystery.

Dr. Lieubalt and Dr. Bernheim (1840-1919), two general practitioners and advocates of the power of hypnotism, used it to treat every possible disease found in the medical dictionary, Dr.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, studied hypnoism under the tutelage of these two doctors and later used it successfully in his psycho-analytical researches.

The purpose of writing all this is to point out that there is nothing mysterious or awe-inspiring about faith-healers or their cures.

SANJAY DESHMUKH,
Bombay.

COMMENT: Unmasking Swamis? From the lofty pedestal of a respected Swamiji to that of an ordinary hypnotist! What a fall, my god-men!!

RATIONALISTS CONDEMN GHASTLY ASSAULT

In a statement, Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, the President of Indian Rationalist Association, has strongly condemned the ghastly assault on Mr. S. V. Patel, the organiser of the Vidarbha Muslim-Satya Shodhak Mandal, at Amravati by some fanatic Muslims, as it is illomened for the healthy growth of democracy and rational attitude for human prosperity.

He has equally condemned the heinous attacks of obscurantist, parochial forces on Marxists and Communists in Kerala, West Bengal elsewhere in the country, which forebodes disastrous consequences if not in time curbed by the power that be.

He has appealed to all the rationalist associations and like-minded democratically thinking people of India to raise their righteous indignation against such gruesome happenings.

Y. A. Lokhandwala, President

I. R. A.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following New Members to I.R.A.

ORDINARY MEMBERS:

| Membership No. | Name | Place |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| M-512 | Mr. R. Arumugaswamy, B.Sc., | Bombay (Maharashtra) |
| M-513 | Mr. P. P. Shah | Baroda (Gujarat) |
| M-514 | Mr. K. Srirama Moorthy, B.A., B Ed., | Bhimavaram (A.P.) |
| M-515 | Mr. Parash Z. Patel | Sura (Gujarat) |
| M-516 | Mr. V. R. Narla | Hydrabad (A.P.) |

STUDENT MEMBER:

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|
| SM-71 | Ms. J. Suohadra | Madras (Tamilnadu) |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|

—A. SURYANARAYANA,
General Secretary, IRA

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| 1979 | IX | 380 | Rs. 18/- |

— Treasurer, IRA.

**ANOTHER LAND MARK IN THE HISTORY OF
INDIAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION**



GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

&

Tenth all India Rationalist Conference

on

27th & 28th December 1980

at

BOMBAY

Admission only for member of I.R.A. and its Affiliated Association. This is a unique occasion for all Rationalists in India to meet Senior Rationalists and participate in the deliberations. Please reserve the above dates. More details in the next issue.

Edited and published by C. A. Seshadri, for Indian Rationalist Association, 29/18, Patheon Road, Madras-600 008, Printed at Ambiga Printers, (phone 21160) Madras-1, for Vijee Press.